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SUBJECT: MOLDOVA'S 2009 PRIORITIES FOR
TRANSNISTRIAN SETTLEMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: In a January 29 meeting, Minister for Reintegration Vasile Sova outlined Moldova's program of Transnistrian reintegration priorities for 2009 and reviewed the results of recent consultations with the Russians and Ukrainians. Moldova's four priorities are: resumption of the 5-plus-2 talks, unilateral steps that the GOM could take, the program of confidence-building measures and demilitarization. Sova said that the recent visit of Russian negotiator Nesterushkin had achieved "absolutely zero," while consultations with Ukrainian negotiator Kryanovsky had largely focused on the problem of completing demarcation of the Transnistrian segment of their common border. Sova confirmed Voronin's readiness to meet again with Smirnov in mid-March, while noting that there was no timetable or agenda yet for a Medvedev-Voronin-Smirnov meeting. He expected that Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov would visit Moldova February 23-24, perhaps to help facilitate holding such a 2-plus-1 session. In the meantime, Sova is focusing on internal consultations with political party leaders within Moldova to ensure a national consensus on Transnistria that will keep the reintegration process running smoothly after the upcoming elections. End summary.

Moldova Adopts Four-Point Plan of Priorities for
2009

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¶12. (C) On January 29, Minister for Reintegration Vasile Sova told Ambassador that at a recent meeting with an inner circle of policymakers, President Voronin had reviewed the events of 2007-2008 and approved a program of reintegration priorities for 2009. The GOM priorities are grouped into four key issues as follows:

-- (1) Resumption of 5-plus-2 talks: Moldova seeks a resumption of talks on the basis of its document package. Sova underlined that Moldova would refrain from signing any intermediate-term documents (i.e., no agreements with Russia). The Moldovans intend to continue consultations with the EU and Russia in hopes of ensuring that the Transnistrian problem is addressed at the next Russia-EU summit. Sova said that the GOM seeks to convene an International Donors Conference for Post-Conflict Reconstruction by the end of 2009. Sova said he was conducting internal consultations with major political parties and NGOs to ensure

that a viable national consensus on Transnistria continued after the elections.

-- (2) Unilateral Steps: The GOM is developing an action plan for unilateral steps it could take to help the reintegration process. Sova said that he would hold preliminary consultations with all 5-plus-2 partners prior to implementing the projects. He said the GOM would like to implement social and economic projects with the idea of promoting Transnistrian involvement within a single Moldovan space. The current status damages exports and imports as well as internal trade, he noted. Sova envisions a number of unilateral projects in the spheres of agriculture, irrigation, education, license plates, telephonic communications, roads, etc.

-- (3) Program of Confidence-Building Measures: The GOM will focus on the confidence-building working group process in order to have Tiraspol engaged in the work. However, he continued Sova, if the Transnistrian side continued to ignore this process, the GOM would focus on unilateral measures.

-- (4) Demilitarization: Though the concept of demilitarization was originally introduced under the banner of confidence-building measures, the GOM would consider it as a separate priority for ¶2009. Sova said that he had already discussed with OSCE's Ambassador Remler the possibility of

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holding a seminar within the 5-plus-2 format (either closed or public) in order to develop a plan outlining the steps needed to carry out demilitarization. Sova proposed that such a seminar take place under OSCE aegis within the next 1-2 months. He noted that some actions would be needed in order to get the Russians to resume their withdrawal of ammunition and troops. However, continued Sova, to some extent this would depend upon the results of US-Russia talks on the CFE Treaty. Sova noted that the GOM had received some reporting from its diplomatic missions about the CFE talks. He added that another component of the demilitarization process would be transition from the current peacekeeping force to a civilian observer mission.

¶3. (C) Sova said that, in addition to the four-point plan, he had also prepared a detailed commentary addressing all economic issues raised by Smirnov at the December 24 meeting with President Voronin. Sova said that the GOM would address these economic issues in light of the reintegration process rather than as if dealing with an independent entity. Whatever the reaction of Tiraspol to Chisinau's responses, the GOM would still go ahead with implementing measures leading towards reintegration.

Ukrainian Issues: Border Demarcation and EUBAM

¶4. (C) During his recent visit, Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister and Ambassador at Large for Transnistria Viktor Kryzhanivskyi had focused largely on the need to complete demarcation of the Transnistrian portion of the border, said Sova. Another important issue was the necessity of an exchange of diplomatic notes to resolve extension of EUBAM for another two years. Sova said that Kryzhanivskyi had agreed that the Ukrainians would adopt a more active position on the settlement

process. Their talks had also focused on how to motivate Russia to withdraw its ammunition and forces.

¶ 15. (C) The Ambassador noted that he had just returned from several days in Ukraine and reported that high-level Ukrainian officials had confirmed their support for the continuation of the EUBAM mission. However, repeatedly the Ukrainians had raised the question of demarcation of the border, which seemed to be a major issue for them. The Ambassador had concluded from his talks in Kyiv that Ukraine shared similar priorities in 5-plus-2, and was committed to finding a solution that preserved Moldova's territorial integrity while giving a special status to Transnistria.

Consultations with the Russians Less Productive

¶ 16. (C) Sova said Russian negotiator Nesterushkin had recently visited Moldova (Jan. 26-27). Asking that this comment be considered off the record, he noted that the result had been "absolutely zero." They had discussed the need for mediators and observers to discuss resumption of the 5-plus-2 talks. The GOM had asked Russia to add Transnistria settlement to the agenda at the next Russia-EU summit. Nesterushkin had promised only that the Russians "would examine this proposal." Sova had also suggested that Russia support the idea of an OSCE-led seminar on demilitarization. Sova said he had told Nesterushkin that the Moldovans would like to see greater engagement on the part of Russia, suggesting that Russia should actively call upon the parties to find a solution, rather than just passively wait for the parties to come up with the answer themselves.

¶ 17. (C) Sova went on to note that Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov was planning to visit Moldova in February (Feb. 23-24). Sova believed that Lavrov likely had two main goals for his visit. One was to demonstrate that Russian-Moldovan relations were now better than they had been after the crisis resulting from the failure to adopt the Kozak Memorandum in 2003. The other, speculated

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Sova, might be to explore the possibility of a Medvedev-Voroin meeting. However, Sova was not sure that the Russians would want to meet with Voroin as a lame duck, and speculated that they might prefer to wait until after the elections. The timing of the visit more than a month before the elections would give the GOM time to take any necessary steps, Sova said.

¶ 18. (C) Sova said that President Voroin had confirmed his intention to meeting with Smirnov in mid-March, as had been agreed when the two leaders met on December 24th. He speculated on whether there would be a Medvedev-Voroin-Smirnov meeting in March, and concluded that this issue might be addressed during Lavrov's visit. He said that President Voroin intended to tell Lavrov that there was no wiggle room on the main component of the Moldovan package document, i.e., that any solution must provide for a special status for Transnistria within a united Moldovan state. This was a red line beyond which there was no flexibility and no compromise.

Looking Towards the Election Campaign and Afterwards

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¶9. (C) Sova said that during the electoral campaign in February and March, he would seek to maintain momentum in the Transnistria settlement process, but not accelerate it. He said that he was focusing on carrying out internal consultations within Moldova to ensure national consensus so that the reintegration process would continue after the elections.

Comment

¶10. (C) The Moldovan plan of priorities for 2009 appears to be well thought out. The GOM is wise to include a category of unilateral measures that can be taken to help bring the sides together, even in the absence of cooperation from Tiraspol. In the end, pragmatic economic interests can force cooperation despite resistance from the political hard-liners. We support the GOM in its efforts to restart the 5-plus-2 negotiations. It is important that the negotiating process move into a new phase of tackling the status issue, and not remain stuck on problems relating to confidence-building measures. While these CBMs can help bring the sides together, they should not become a process just for their own sake when the real issue is resolving the question of Transnistria's status.

CHAUDHRY